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China to Test ICBM

From Our Wire Services

LONDON, Dec. 16.

COMMUNIST diplomatic sources said Monday Red China had intensified its rocket program to make up for time lost during the power struggle and is expected to test its first intercontinental ballistic rocket system in 1969.

If the test is successful, the United States and the heart of the Soviet Union and its major industrial centers would come within range of Peking's nuclear rockets.

The sources, whose governments are represented in the Red Chinese capital, said Peking recently stepped up its rocket program after temporary delays resulting from the upheavals of Mao Tse-tung's "cultural revolution."

Tight secrecy blankets the nuclear and missiles sector of Peking's arms development programs. But it appeared that short and medium range rockets already may be deployed throughout the country while progress is being made in perfecting a long range delivery system.

The first test is expected next year, possibly in the first six months of 1969.

This would involve an ICBM with a range of 3500 miles. The test would concentrate on the missile system. No nuclear warhead would be tested at the time.

Experts maintain that even if the test proves successful it may be some two or three years before such rockets could become operational.